



National
Gallery
of Art

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THE SYDNEY J. FREEDBERG LECTURE ON ITALIAN ART

Telling the Past Differently: Italian Renaissance Art in the Hands of the Beholder

Friday, October 30, 2020 | 1:00 p.m.

Megan Holmes, University of Michigan

Collections of Italian Renaissance panel paintings were in many cases assembled through a process of connoisseurial evaluation. The National Gallery of Art collection is no exception: a number of the paintings passed that evaluative scrutiny in spite of surface damage in the form of intentional scratches — noted in later conservation reports as “vandalism.” Defacement and disfiguration are, in fact, fairly common features of panel paintings, but they are rarely mentioned in art-historical accounts. The paintings, once installed in religious, domestic, and civic spaces in Renaissance Italy, were acted upon and transformed by the people who encountered and used them in their daily lives. The recovery of representational scratches provides a timely opportunity to tell the history of Italian Renaissance art differently, revealing the complex earlier “lives” of paintings in the hands of beholders.

This event will premiere at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, October 30, with closed captions, on both the Gallery’s [Facebook](#) page and its [YouTube](#) site, and will be archived on the Gallery’s website.

Megan Holmes is a professor of Italian Renaissance art history at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor. She received an MPhil from the Courtauld Institute of Art and a PhD from Harvard University. Her scholarly interests include the social history of art, miraculous images and image cults, popular religion, early modern print culture, and reconceptualizing late medieval and early modern iconoclasm. In addition to numerous articles, she has published two books, *Fra Filippo Lippi the Carmelite Painter* (1999) and *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (2013). The latter received the College Art Association Charles Rufus Morey Award and the Ace/Mercer Award in 2014. This lecture derives from her current research for a book on the scratching and marking of Italian panel paintings, c. 1250 – 1550.

This is the twenty-fourth annual lecture offered by the National Gallery of Art in this endowed series named after Sydney J. Freedberg (1914 – 1997), the great specialist of Italian art.

Lorenzo Monaco, *Madonna and Child* (detail), 1413.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1943.4.13